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ABSTRACT

A research project chronicling the nature and extent of the structured staff development undertaken by teachers and trainers employed at public and private providers of vocational education and training (VET) in Australia was one component of a larger study that examined the changing role of staff development for VET teachers and trainers. Data for the study were obtained from a telephone survey of human resource personnel at 384 VET providers and from a mailed survey of 686 teachers and trainers. The study found that staff development activities, classified as formal qualifications and structured education and training activities, were common in most institutions. Public providers, however, were likely to have more staff development structures and programs than private VET providers, since private providers are more likely to hire only teachers who already have all the training needed for the job. Teachers were more likely to have already achieved formal qualifications in a subject area and then to take additional formal qualification courses or education and training activities in teaching methods. Teachers cited pressures from work and difficulties with location and timing of staff development opportunities as significant barriers to engaging in staff development activities. The study concluded that a significant amount of staff development is occurring throughout the country, but that further research is needed to determine what kind of training is needed for the "new professional" of the future. (Contains 14 references.) (KC)

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Differing realities: staff development in public and private providers of VET

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One of the key by-products of training reform in Australia has been diversification in the types of organisations that offer vocational education and training (VET). The numbers of private providers registered on the National Training Information Service database has increased to over 3,000 across all states and territories. Another by-product of the reform process has been the gradual transformation of the roles of those persons charged with the delivery of VET. Teachers and trainers are now being called upon to take up an increasingly diverse range of tasks in environments that include schools, workplaces and virtual classrooms. The overall picture is of an increasingly diverse workforce, where shifts are occurring in terms of employment patterns (particularly in relation to the casualisation of the workforce) and the requirement for teachers and trainers to undertake initial and ongoing training for their roles.

This paper is based on data collected as part of a NREC-funded study which examined the changing role of staff development for teachers and trainers in VET (Harris et al 2000). The paper takes as its particular focus the presentation of data relating to the nature and extent of staff development activities undertaken by teachers and trainers in public and private training organisations.

Background literature

Recognition of the changing role of VET teachers and trainers and their importance in the development of a quality VET system was noted as far back as the early 1970s. Kangan (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1974) asserted the importance of intensifying teacher development as a key to improving the overall quality of education in the technical and further education (TAFE) system. A sequence of studies examining the role of the TAFE teacher pointed to an increasingly diversified role for teachers which extended well beyond their traditional roles as classroom-based teachers (Chappell and Melville 1995; Hall et al 1991; Lepani 1995; VEETAC Working Party on TAFE Staffing Issues 1992; VICAD 1998).

The development of the Workplace Trainer and Assessor competency standards (CSB-Assessor and Workplace Trainers 1994) in the early days of training reform was significant for a number of reasons. This was perhaps the first articulation of the role of *VET* teachers and trainers. TAFE teachers were subsumed into a much broader grouping of teachers and trainers who worked in a diverse range of settings. Secondly, it also made possible the disaggregation of the role of a VET teacher and trainer into a number of functions, all with their own separate developmental pathway. The most recent version of the standards (included in the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training - NAWTB 1999) potentially allows for teachers and trainers to be trained to work as:

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- assessors
- trainers of small groups (the equivalent to the former Workplace Trainer Category 1 qualification)
- deliverers of training
- deliverers and assessors of training, and
- managers of assessment and training.

The workplace assessor and trainer competency standards have had a dramatic effect on the provision of staff development for teachers and trainers themselves (Mathers 1997). A number of major programs have been undertaken to ensure that all staff either complete courses in workplace training or undertake a recognition of prior learning (RPL) or recognition of current competencies (RCC) process to confirm their competence. Courses arising from the standards have become the de facto qualification for teachers and trainers, thus supplanting to a considerable extent previous requirements for undertaking tertiary studies (Harris et al 2000).

Staff development involves purposeful activities which are directly related to the work of the teacher/trainer. It is important to note that staff development can also include initial teacher training. Within VET, there are less clear distinctions between initial training and continuing staff development. Some VET teachers undertaking initial teacher training may be quite experienced, having moved into teaching from industry (Smith 1997, p 109). Currency of industry knowledge and skills is given high priority, with teaching expertise being developed at least initially on-the-job and later through a program of study at a university or a RPL process with a registered training organisation (RTO).

Prior to the reforms of the early 1990s (when VET and TAFE were virtually synonymous), TAFE providers offered internal basic teaching skills programs for permanent, contract and casual staff. Universities also played a significant role in the provision of professional development, particularly for TAFE staff. With the advent of the national workplace trainer and assessor competency standards, a wide range of training providers became involved in offering courses to meet these standards. Major initiatives to support VET staff in implementing the training reforms were developed at both state and federal levels. Examples of these programs included *Implementing CBT, CBT in Action, AVTS Professional Development, National Transition Program,* various National Staff Development Committee initiatives and more recently, *Framing the Future* and *LearnScope.*

In contrast with earlier staff development initiatives that were fundamentally derived from a skills deficit notion and used 'train the trainer' models of delivery, more recent programs have used action learning, work-based learning and flexible delivery as core components. In effect, the provision of staff development appears to be moving towards models which favour the development of 'practical knowledge' – that is knowledge generated as part of practice and which is bound by the situation in which it is generated (Hoban 1997, p 1). This trend is in keeping with broader initiatives promoting situated learning for many occupations. Staff development takes on an *ad hoc,* though not necessarily totally random, character. Learning is still highly structured by the nature of the workplace and the work undertaken in it. Recent research (Poell et al 1998; Van der Krogt 1998) suggests that learning in the

workplace can take on multiple forms (learning embedded in policies and formal learning programs, learning in groups, learning driven by external bodies such as professional associations, learning initiated by individual workers). All of these forms are valuable and together comprise the rich and varied network of learning that can be used to underpin and support teachers and trainers in their various roles.

The research process

The nature and extent of the structured staff development undertaken by teachers and trainers employed in public and private RTOs was one component of a larger study which examined the changing role of staff development for VET teachers and trainers (Harris et al 2000). Organisational level data relating to the structural arrangements underpinning the provision of structured staff development were obtained from a telephone survey of human resource personnel in 394 VET providers across Australia. Data relating to the nature and extent of staff development activities undertaken by teachers and trainers were derived from a postal survey of teachers and trainers employed in 311 of those organisations responding to the telephone survey.

The sample of RTOs was comprised of 42% commercial providers, 30% community-based providers, 16% enterprise-based providers and 12% TAFE institutes (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample of registered training organisations by type of provider and state

	TAFE institutes	Commercial provider	Community-based provider	Enterprise-based provider	Total
South Australia	6	17	9	6	38
Victoria	12	29	37	15	93
New South Wales	4	32	25	15	76
Northern Territory	3	4	4	1	12
Western Australia	9	22	12	8	51
Queensland	13	47	22	15	97
Tasmania	1	7	5	2	15
Australian Capital Territory	0	9	3	0	12
Total	48	167	117	62	394

Of the 686 teachers and trainers who participated in the postal survey, 55% were employed in public and 36% in private RTOs. Nine percent of respondents labelled their employer as 'other', which comprised combinations of the private categories (community-based, commercial and enterprise-based) of provider. Almost 53% were employed on a permanent basis, with 23% employed on a contract basis, 20% on a casual/sessional basis and 4% working as self-employed contractors.

One fifth of the teachers and trainers (n=141, 20.6%) worked for more than one VET provider. One quarter of the private staff, compared with 17% of the TAFE staff, worked for other providers. Nearly one quarter of the respondents (n=163, 23.6%)

claimed that their main occupation was not as a teacher or trainer. Many of those for example in the casual/sessional mode of employment would have had occupations other than teaching as their primary job. Eighty-six percent of the TAFE staff listed their main occupation as that of a teacher/trainer, compared with 64% of the staff in private providers.

Within each of the four types of providers, there were not great differences in employment modes. Around 50% were permanent in three of them, with a higher proportion (65%) permanent in enterprises. TAFE and community-based providers were more likely to employ contract staff, the other two more likely to engage self-employed contractors, and enterprises less likely to employ casual/sessional trainers.

The mode of delivery in which the majority (52%) worked was 'predominantly institution-based', with lesser proportions reporting 'predominantly flexible delivery' (28%), 'predominantly on-job' (18%) or a combination of these modes (29%) (some respondents gave more than one answer). Far more TAFE staff (63%) were engaged in institution-based delivery than non-TAFE staff (40%).

The predominant fields of study in which the responding teachers and trainers worked were business/administration (n=127), ESL/literacy/numeracy (n=125), health/community services (n=103), computing (n=78) and service/hospitality (n=65). TAFE staff were concentrated more than private staff in architecture/building (7% cf 3%), surveying/ engineering (10% cf 4%), hospitality/service (12% cf 7%) and arts/humanities/social sciences (12% cf 5%). Staff in private RTOs were more involved than those in TAFE in the four areas of health/community services (21% cf.12%), ESL/literacy/numeracy (21% cf 17%), education (13% cf 6%) and computing (15% cf 10%).

Structural arrangements to support the provision of staff development for teachers and trainers

Overall, 30% of the providers had a specialist staff development unit or section, 30% had a staff development committee and 76% had people within their organisation with specific responsibility for staff development. Given the climate of tight resources, these proportions were high and were an indication that the providers were serious about staff development as an integral component of their operations. Further analysis shows that TAFE institutions have these structures in place far more than private providers (Figure 1), which may be a reflection of the larger size and longer history of the public institutions.

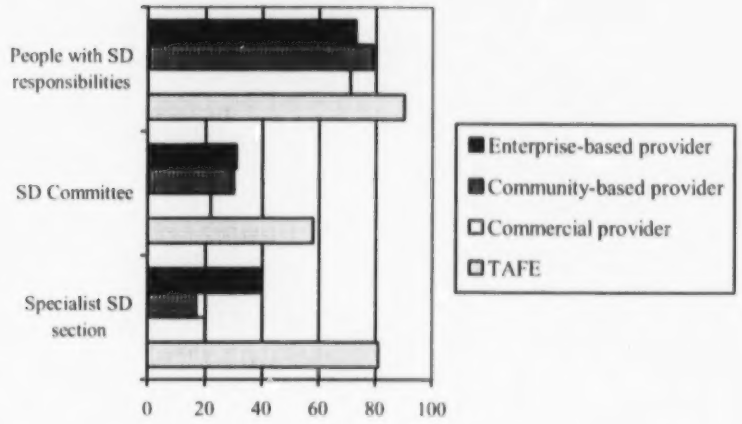

Figure 1: Staff development structures in private and public training providers

Factors influencing decision making about staff development

As part of the telephone survey, human resource personnel from each registered training organisation were asked to rate the importance of various factors influencing staff development decisions within their organisation. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of these factors by type of provider.

The factors that are reported to influence such decisions in TAFE are significantly more related to government policy directions (eg training reforms, the open training market and RTO registration requirements) and their consequent impact on the institutional context (eg organisational strategic directions, senior management commitment and changes in attitudes and culture) than they are in the case of the private providers.

The responses of the private providers are relatively consistent with each other. The slight variations are consistent with what would be expected given the nature of their type of RTO. For instance, enterprises are more influenced than the others by the driver of changing attitudes and culture, while commercial providers are more influenced than the others by the open training market and improving client focus, and the community-based ones more influenced by funds availability and organisational strategic directions.

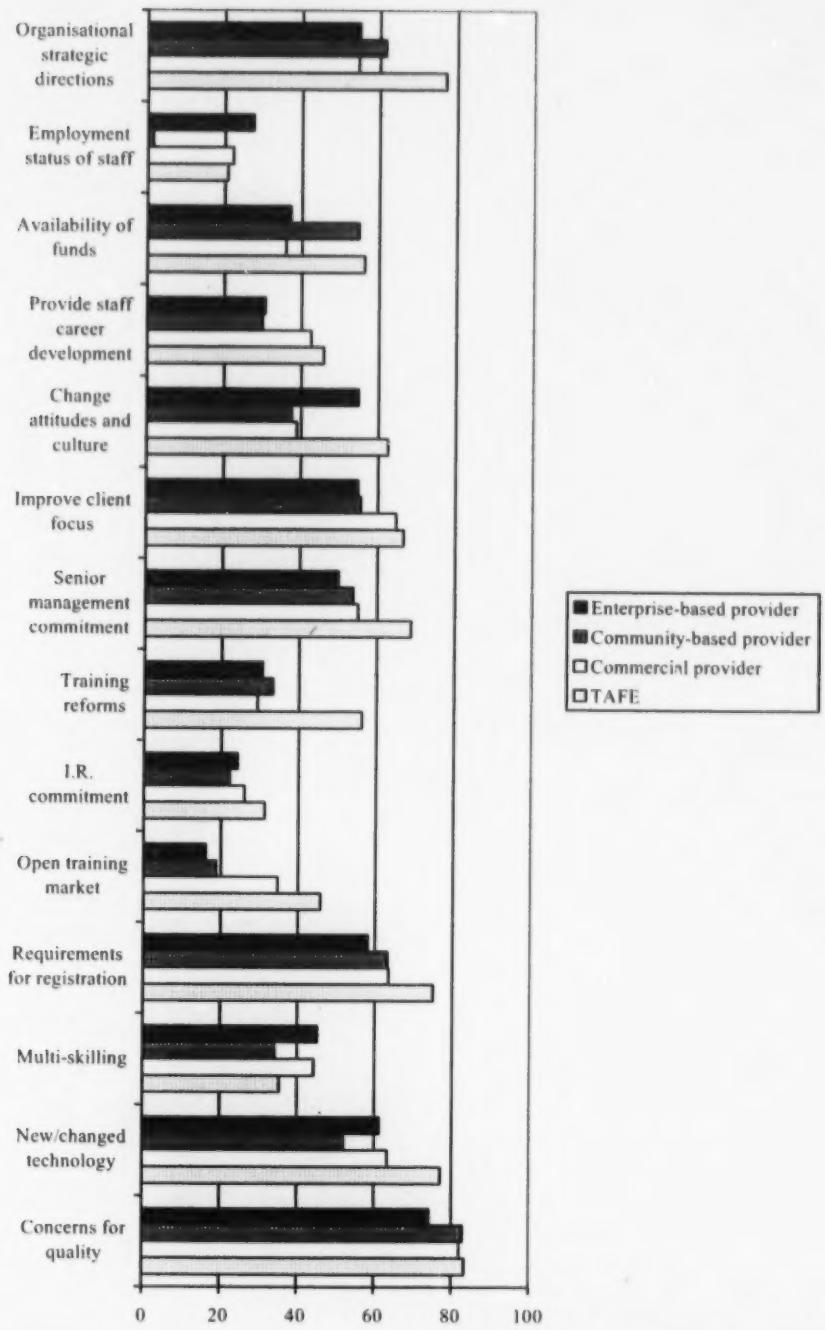

Figure 6: Factors affecting decisions about staff development (rated 'very important') by provider type

Staff development activities undertaken by teachers and trainers

Staff development activities in this study were divided into two main types:

- *formal qualifications* - defined as courses where an award is conferred upon successful completion. They can include postgraduate and graduate qualifications (in a discipline/trade, or specific teaching qualifications) and/or workplace trainer/assessor certificates.

- *structured education and training activities* - defined as work-related activities that could be initiated by the teacher or by the employer, and are designed to develop employment-related skills and competencies, but do not lead to a formal qualification. They can include workshops, lectures, tutorials, training seminars, conferences, industry release, interstate or overseas tours to observe best practice, new developments, action learning programs, flexibly delivered programs and self-directed learning packages.

Formal qualifications

Seventy-six percent (n=299) of the providers require teachers/trainers to have a minimum teaching/training qualification at the time of their appointment, and 42% (n=167) require them to complete teaching/training qualifications after they have commenced employment in their organisation. There was a statistically significant difference in the approaches of public and private providers in their patterns of recruitment. While only 54% of TAFE institutions required a minimum teaching/training qualification at the time of appointment, as many as 81% of commercial, 79% of community and 73% of enterprise-based providers required this ($X^2 = 16.04$, df = 3, p = .001). Conversely, the equivalent percentages of providers requiring these qualifications to be completed after appointment were 69% for TAFE, and 41%, 33% and 44% for the three types of private provider ($X^2 = 17.81$, df = 3, p = .000).

The teachers and trainers were asked to provide details of the formal qualifications they held and when they had completed them. Respondents could provide details on up to five qualifications. These data are reported in Table 2.

There were several marked and revealing differences between private and public teachers/trainers in the type of formal qualifications they had completed. TAFE staff had focused more than private staff on trade/technician certificates (17% cf 6%), and on various levels of teaching awards (89% cf 58%), especially postgraduate teaching qualifications. On the other hand, staff in private RTOs had concentrated more than TAFE staff on non-teaching postgraduate qualifications (25% cf 15%) and workplace assessor/training awards (62% cf 43%), especially the Certificate IV in Workplace Training.

One significant trend to emerge is that a large number of qualifications held by teachers and trainers prior to their employment in the VET sector relate to their discipline area (that is, non-teaching qualifications). Once employed, a large number of teachers/trainers gain qualifications which further develop their teaching/training skills. However, teachers/ trainers working in private RTOs were more likely to have a teaching/training qualification prior to employment (57%

compared with 43%). This is in keeping with the trend noted above from the RTO data, in relation to the requirements of private RTOs for their newly appointed teachers/trainers already to have teaching/training qualifications prior to appointment.

Table 2: Formal qualifications acquired before and after employment, by type of RTO

Qualification	Employed in public RTO (n = 362*)				Employed in private RTO (n = 297*)			
	Acquired before		Acquired after		Acquired before		Acquired after	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Certificate (other**)	65	18	32	9	39	13	29	10
Advanced certificate	8	2	8	2	5	2	-	
Trade	57	16	2	1	15	5	2	1
Technician	1	-	-		-		-	
Diploma (other)	44	12	11	3	41	14	13	4
Associate diploma	20	6	4	1	13	4	3	1
Advanced diploma	4	1	1	-	3	1	2	1
Bachelors degree (other**)	133	37	18	5	112	38	9	3
Postgraduate qualifications (other**)	23	6	30	8	42	14	29	10
Workplace assessor certificate	4	1	33	9	8	3	31	10
Workplace trainer Category 1	4	1	11	3	10	3	12	4
Certificate IV in Workplace Training	15	4	87	24	36	12	85	29
Bachelors degree (teaching, adult/ vocational education)	4	1	24	7	4	1	7	2
Bachelor of Education	28	8	31	9	33	11	16	5
Teaching diploma	30	8	43	12	36	12	13	4
Diploma of Education	36	10	16	4	19	6	3	1
Postgraduate qualification (teaching, adult/ vocational education)	26	7	64	18	16	5	13	4
Teaching certificate	9	3	8	2	7	2	2	1
Other formal qualifications	66	18	67	19	82	28	65	22

Notes: Respondents could give more than one answer. 'Other' means not in teaching or education.

Formal qualifications currently being undertaken

One-third of the teachers and trainers were currently undertaking studies for formal qualifications at the time of the survey (including 17 teachers who were studying for

two formal qualifications at the same time). Thirty-four percent of the TAFE staff and 29% of the staff in private RTOs were currently studying. By employment mode, 100 (28%) of the permanent staff, 71 (45%) of the contract staff and 40 (30%) of the casual staff were in the process of completing formal qualifications at the time of the survey.

There is virtually no difference between public and private teachers/trainers in terms of reasons for completing formal qualifications. There were only two reasons where the ranking differed and, in these cases, the difference was only by one position. The top four reasons were identically ranked:

- to assist long-term career prospects
- to acquire qualifications
- to enhance qualifications already achieved
- to update industry knowledge and skills.

Structured education and training activities

The study inquired from teachers and trainers what structured education and training activities (across a range of designated topics) they had undertaken in the last twelve months while employed in their RTO (they could give more than one response). Only 10% (n=71) of teachers/trainers reported that they had undertaken no such activities in the past year: these were evenly divided between public (36 teachers/trainers) and private providers (35 teachers/trainers).

Table 3: Number of teachers/trainers who have undertaken staff development covering the designated topics

	Public sector		Private sector	
	Frequency *	% (n = 373)	Frequency *	% (n = 304)
Leadership and management skills	86	23.1	98	32.2
Industry liaison	99	26.5	63	20.7
Project management	48	12.9	43	14.1
Quality assurance	79	21.2	60	19.7
Computing/IT	146	39.1	113	37.2
Interpersonal skills, team work	90	24.1	75	24.7
Research skills	34	9.0	28	9.2
OH&S	116	31.1	79	26.0
Training Packages	166	44.5	132	43.4
User Choice	45	12.1	50	16.4
New Apprenticeships	52	13.9	41	13.5
Updating teaching/training skills	86	23.0	75	24.7
Updating discipline/field of knowledge	127	34.0	73	24.0
Assessment	82	22.0	89	29.3

Other areas	39	10.5	21	6.9

Note: Respondents could give more than one answer.

Table 3 indicates that by far the most common types of staff development activities (albeit for less than half of all respondents) for teaching/training staff in both public and private providers were in the areas of Training Packages and computing/IT. Beyond these topics, these data then reveal some important differences in foci. Just over one third of teachers/ trainers in public RTOs undertook staff development activities relating to updating their discipline/field of knowledge compared with just under one quarter of teachers/trainers in private RTOs. Whist updating teaching skills was undertaken by comparatively similar proportions of staff from both types of RTO, more staff from public sector organisations undertook staff development in occupational health and safety and industry liaison. Assessment was a focus for 29% of staff development activities for teachers/trainers in the private sector compared with only 22% in the public sector. This difference in interest in training and development related to assessment could be viewed as somewhat surprising, given that assessment has been a core component of the competency-based training system within VET for over ten years. It may, however, reflect the re-emergence of assessment as an issue in relation to the implementation of Training Packages or the interest of private providers in providing 'assessment only' services to clients. The relatively low frequencies for staff development in New Apprenticeships and User Choice for all types of provider may reflect the fact that these policy areas have been under implementation for a period of time or that they are not so relevant to the teachers in this sample. The relatively low frequencies of staff development relating to research skills are also of note.

The reasons for undertaking structured staff development activities centred on updating discipline/field, keeping up with the current job and updating teaching/training skills (Table 4). The high ranking of updating discipline/field knowledge by teachers/trainers in private RTOs stands in contrast to the reported areas in which they undertook their staff development activities (Table 3). This may be accounted for, in part, by the fact that a larger proportion of teachers from private training providers taught in computing-related fields and therefore staff development in IT/computing addressed their 'field of knowledge'. Across both types of provider, staff development activity was not clearly being used primarily for the purposes of short-term promotion and long-term career advancement, nor even for job satisfaction (particularly for private RTO teachers/trainers).

Table 4: Reasons for undertaking structured staff development by type of RTO

Reason	Public RTOs Ranking	Private RTOs Ranking
Enhance qualifications already received	Ranked 5	Ranked 4
Keep up with current job	Ranked 1	Ranked 2

Required by employer	Ranked 6	Ranked 5
Update discipline/field knowledge/skills	Ranked 2	Ranked 1
Increase job satisfaction	Ranked 4	Ranked 6
Get promotion in the short term	Ranked 8	Ranked 8
Assist long-term career prospects	Ranked 7	Ranked 7
Update teaching/training skills	Ranked 3	Ranked 3

Factors preventing teachers/trainers from undertaking staff development

Teachers and trainers were asked to choose from a number of factors that they believed prevented them from undertaking formal qualifications or attending education and training activities in the last twelve months (Table 5).

The most often cited barriers preventing teachers and trainers from undertaking both formal qualifications and structured staff development activities were exactly the same regardless of the type of RTO. Pressure from work and difficulties with the location and timing of staff development opportunities were clearly significant barriers. The perception that both public and private RTOs do not have enough funds for structured staff development activities was also cited as a significant barrier – most notably by more teachers/trainers employed in public RTOs. Barriers relating to the funding of study for formal qualifications and family commitments were significant barriers for teachers and trainers regardless of their employer.

The need to take off time without pay to attend staff development activities of any type appears to be a more significant barrier for teachers/trainers in private RTOs, whilst the issue of finding replacement teachers appears to impact on greater numbers of teachers employed in public RTOs. The perception of a lack of encouragement from employers is also a notable barrier.

Table 5: Factors preventing teachers / trainers undertaking staff development by type of RTO

	Structured education and training activities		Formal qualifications	
Factor	**Public** % (n = 373)	**Private** % (n = 304)	**Public** % (n = 373)	**Private** % (n = 304)
Approval not given	11.3	3.6	2.9	4.3
Available places taken	9.7	3.6	1.1	3.6
No relief teachers/trainers available	25.7	13.8	7.2	8.2
RTO does not have enough funds for SD	27.3	13.5	9.9	11.5
Insufficient information	12.9	10.2	6.2	5.3
Teacher/trainer - no money to spend on SD	12.6	9.2	11.3	13.8
Location and timing difficulties	38.3	33.2	18.0	19.4
Dissatisfied with previous SD	5.1	3.6	2.1	1.6
Lack of encouragement from employers	15.0	10.5	10.5	7.2
Pressure of work	42.4	39.9	22.0	31.6
Family commitments	13.7	12.5	12.6	15.8
Child care not available	4.0	3.3	1.6	2.6
Activities not relevant to needs	10.2	9.5	2.7	4.3
Not interested	0.5	1.0	1.6	1.0
Not eligible to attend	2.4	1.3	0.8	1.6
Negative reports of SD	1.6	1.6	0	1.0
Reluctant to take time off without pay	6.4	9.5	6.7	10.9
Other reasons	0.8	3.0	2.7	5.9

Note: Respondents could give more than one answer.

Discussion and conclusions

This paper has reported on a subset of data from a larger study examining staff development activities of VET teachers and trainers in a sample of respondents from public and private RTOs across all states and territories. It has also identified perceived barriers to participation. These findings underscore some of the similarities and differences in the approaches to staff development that are emerging in a context where the VET workforce is increasingly diversified.

The difference in approaches to what is required of teachers and trainers at the time of appointment is a significant issue. Private training providers are far more likely to recruit already qualified staff, while TAFE is more prepared to follow what has been 'traditional' practice in allowing their staff to complete their teaching/training qualifications following appointment. At this point in time, it appears that private

training providers are able to meet their demand for qualified staff, but this may not always be the case. In the absence of people with relevant industrial experience being prepared to undertake a further qualification in the hope of perhaps obtaining work with private training providers (or a 'pool' of VET teachers and trainers who are seeking work as a result of redundancy or downsizing, etc), the issue of the most appropriate developmental pathway for the preparation of VET teachers and trainers needs to be addressed. This scenario is further complicated by evidence that supports the emergence of an increasingly differentiated VET workforce where a highly trained permanent cohort of teachers and trainers are working alongside staff with less qualifications working within carefully prescribed guidelines. Alternatively, teachers and trainers might be working collaboratively with a range of people for whom the task of training is only one part of their job (for example people working with apprentices and trainees in the workplace). Career paths could potentially either disintegrate or become highly fragmented, thus rendering the decision to make a costly investment in ongoing training and development a problematic one for many teachers and trainers.

The difference in recruitment practices between public and private VET providers also explains to a considerable extent their varying approaches to ongoing staff development. Far more TAFE institutions have specialist structures for staff development than do private training providers. This fact, coupled with an emerging trend for teachers/trainers to make a contribution to the costs of their initial and ongoing development, may result in the responsibility for training and development for teachers and trainers being unevenly shared across providers in the VET sector.

This presents an even greater dilemma in the context of evidence from this study, which suggests that factors more external to providers and their staff are most heavily impacting on decisions made by providers about staff development. The changing policy context of VET evidently has a heavy influence on the nature and extent of staff development. Staff development appears to be driven largely by the need for training organisations to comply with the requirements of various external agencies. This increases the tension between the needs of organisations in terms of outcomes from staff development activities and the needs of individual teachers and trainers in terms of their career advancement, and improved capacity to deal with the demands of work or job satisfaction.

Both VET teachers and trainers and the organisations that employ them have three choices in relation to staff development - to opt out entirely, to do the minimum, or to adapt their thinking about staff development in order to meet the demands of new environments in which they are operating. Staff development does have a role in the second of these alternatives, in that it can help survival in the same things (eg teaching techniques, package development) or bring about minor changes (eg 'awareness' of policy shifts). However, it is in the third of the above alternatives that staff development has the most significant role to play, through assisting VET teachers and trainers to work professionally.

Evidence from this study indicates that a significant quantum of staff development is occurring, and in certain areas. Some of this activity could be classified as relevant to the second alternative above. But there is also other activity that is potentially integral to the third alternative. Alongside the changing profile of the VET workforce, the role of VET teachers and trainers is also undergoing considerable

rethinking. Certainly there is evidence now of an awakening interest among policy-makers and researchers in the 'new VET professional'. Understanding how teachers and trainers might be able to work creatively in developing new knowledge and approaches to education and training in complex and dilemma-ridden environments - that is, to work professionally - remains the task of further research.

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